

**Foreign Policy Analysis:  
A Comparative Introduction**

Marijke Breuning

palgrave  
macmillan

2007

the road to the completion of this project. I owe a great debt to these and many other individuals who have, in small and large ways, shaped my thinking about the field of foreign policy analysis. Of course, the responsibility for the final product is mine alone.

Last, but not least, I want thank my spouse, John, and my daughters, Fasika and Bedelwa. You deserve my undivided attention, but accepted much less. Maybe now that the book is done, we can travel without the laptop coming along.

M.B.

## Chapter I

# Why Study Foreign Policy Comparatively?

## Chapter Preview

- Explains what distinguishes foreign policy analysis as an approach to the study of international politics.
- Explains the difference between foreign policy options, decisions, behaviors, and outcomes.
- Explains the difference between individual, state, and system levels of analysis.
- Explains the value of studying foreign policy comparatively and the basics of the comparative method.

## Why Study Foreign Policy?

Leaders have made many puzzling foreign policy decisions across the years. Although some of those decisions turned out to be of little consequence and have been largely forgotten, on many occasions such decisions have plunged countries into major crisis or war. Consider the following decisions, which both reporters at the time and historians who wrote about them later found puzzling.

Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraq, invaded Kuwait in the early 1990s only to find that the United States, under President George H. W. Bush put together a coalition to push him back out. Saddam Hussein knew that the United States was more powerful and much better armed than Iraq. Although Iraq had, in those days, one of the stronger militaries in the region, it was no match for a superpower. Saddam Hussein may have calculated that the United States was too preoccupied with the demise of the

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Soviet Union and the collapse of the latter's economy to worry about his invasion of a small neighboring state. A meeting with the American ambassador to Iraq, career diplomat April Glaspie, reinforced his assessment. She made the now-famous statement that "we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts like your border disagreement with Kuwait."<sup>1</sup> Saddam Hussein may have interpreted this to mean that the United States would not take action if his military attacked Kuwait. Should he have realized that the United States, no matter how much it appeared to be otherwise engaged, could not accept his seizure of the small, but oil-rich Kuwait?

Decades earlier, Neville Chamberlain, prime minister of Britain, made a fateful deal with Adolph Hitler of Germany during the infamous Munich conference of 1938. Britain would not object to Germany's seizure of the Sudetenland, a portion of Czechoslovakia bordering on Germany and with a German-speaking population, as long as Hitler promised he would respect the sovereignty of the remainder of Czechoslovakia.<sup>2</sup> This small country in the heart of Europe was a very recent creation at that time: it had been carved out of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I, just two decades earlier. It was a multiethnic state, home to the Czechs and Slovaks as well as German, Hungarian, and other smaller ethnic minority groups. Chamberlain returned home confident he had made a deal that would preserve the peace in Europe—an important consideration in a time when the memory of World War I and its enormous toll in human lives was still very fresh. He thought that meeting personally with Hitler had allowed him to judge the latter's character and trustworthiness. He could not have been more wrong. Hitler continued his conquests and soon Europe found itself immersed in World War II.

In the early 1960s, Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union made a decision to build launching sites for nuclear missiles in Cuba and soon found himself embroiled in a crisis. American U-2 spy planes photographed the launchpad while it was still under construction. The discovery came on the heels of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, during which American-trained Cuban exiles had attempted, and failed, to topple Fidel Castro, Cuba's communist leader. The Cold War was still in full swing, and President Kennedy was presiding over a military buildup that would give the United States clear superiority in strategic weapons—something Khrushchev could not ignore. Under those circumstances, the possibility of being able to reach U.S. soil by placing missiles in Cuba was quite tempting, especially since the Soviet Union did not yet have the capacity to launch intercontinental missiles. In addition, the United States had missiles close to Soviet soil in Turkey. Khrushchev may have concluded that placing missiles in Cuba was comparable. Should Khrushchev have been able to foresee that no American

president during the Cold War could have accepted that the Russians were building missile-launching capacities so close to American shores?

Each of these leaders made a decision that was, certainly in retrospect, puzzling. Saddam Hussein stumbled into a war with a coalition of countries headed by the United States that he could not win and that became a prelude to another war a little over a decade later. In the interim, Iraq suffered the economic consequences of the destruction during and the sanctions that followed the war of the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup> Neville Chamberlain lost his position as Prime Minister of Britain and is frequently cited as the man who gave appeasement its bad name. Nikita Khrushchev stumbled into the Cuban Missile Crisis, which brought his country to the brink of war and contributed to the premature end of his political career.

From the vantage point of a foreign observer or with a historian's hindsight, the decisions made by these leaders are puzzling mostly because they "should have known better." Often, such decisions are deemed "irrational," and the leaders who made them are judged to be crazy or just fools. While being dismissive of such policy choices and the leaders who made them may be tempting, it does not help us understand these puzzling decisions very well. There are on occasion leaders whose rationality may be questioned, but there are far fewer such individuals than those who are commonly labeled irrational. Hence, when seeking to explain foreign policy decisions, it is more fruitful to start with the assumption that the leaders who made these puzzling decisions were rational human beings trying their best to make "good" foreign policy decisions for their countries.<sup>4</sup> Once we make that assumption, however, we must also begin to ponder what motivates these leaders, what they understand about the situations they face, and what factors made their decisions turn out to be "bad" ones.

Before we proceed, let's consider two important concepts introduced in the last paragraph: rationality and good foreign policy decisions. It can be difficult to accept that Saddam Hussein was not crazy, Chamberlain not naive, and Khrushchev not a fool. Commonsense notions of rationality demand that each of these leaders should have known better. Yet if we stop to think about the world from the perspective of each leader, knowing what that leader knew *at the time* of the decision, it becomes a little more difficult to maintain this attitude. We might disagree with the goals Saddam Hussein or Khrushchev pursued, and we might judge Chamberlain too preoccupied with preserving peace, but in each case, we can make the argument that these leaders consistently pursued their goals. And this is the main requirement of **rationality**: the demand that the means—or the policy choices—are logically connected to the ends—or the leader's goals. In other words, rationality demands *only* that a decision maker have some



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purpose in mind and make choices designed to achieve those predetermined ends.<sup>5</sup>

To argue that a decision maker is rational, therefore, does not mean that you agree with his or her goals—or that you, even if you had the same goals, could not make different choices. You may find the goals objectionable. Or you may share the goals and yet be convinced that different policies would better achieve those objectives. Additionally, and even more important, rationality does not guarantee a desirable outcome, because the outcome is in part dependent on the reactions of other actors.<sup>6</sup>

That brings us to the second concept, that of **good decisions**. All too often, foreign policy decisions are judged to be good or bad in hindsight. Such evaluations are frequently based on the knowledge that the decision led to a desirable or disastrous outcome.<sup>7</sup> The examples of Saddam Hussein, Chamberlain, and Khrushchev are all decisions that, in hindsight, were judged to be disastrous. They "should have known better." But is hindsight a fair standard? The answer is no. Just as good decisions do not guarantee a good outcome, flawed decisions do not inevitably lead to bad results.

If hindsight and a desirable outcome are problematic guides to judging whether a foreign policy decision was good, then how do we arrive at such judgments? An alternative is to judge decisions based on *how* they were made: were they based on a sound analysis of the situation and careful thought regarding the consequences of possible courses of action?<sup>8</sup> Such judgments rely on insight into the decision process and assessments of the priorities and motivations of leaders. The advantage of judging foreign policy decisions in this manner is that decisions can be evaluated *without* resorting to hindsight. There are two disadvantages, however.

First, such process-oriented judgments are likely to overestimate the degree to which leaders make reasonable decisions. When leaders engage in sound analysis on the basis of a very narrow and skewed perception of the world or on the basis of obviously flawed information, a process-oriented evaluation would lead us to judge the decision as a reasonable one. After all, the proper process was followed. Does that sound like satisfactory analysis to you? Or does it sound like a case of "garbage in, garbage out"? Can a good decision process based on faulty information be expected to yield a reasonable, or even good, decision? More likely than not, you will conclude that it cannot. Hence, a process-oriented assessment is better at helping us understand why a policy maker, or group of policy makers, arrived at a specific foreign policy decision rather than at judging whether that decision was good. That is still valuable because it helps us achieve a greater awareness of the problems and pitfalls involved in decision making.

The second disadvantage of judging foreign policy decisions by the process used to achieve them is a practical problem: it can be quite difficult to figure out whether a foreign policy decision was based on sound analysis and careful thought. Frequently, relevant information may be classified or the necessary records may not exist. Governments and countries differ in their record keeping. They may also have different policies regarding declassification of the documents that do exist and making them available to researchers. This does not make analysis impossible, but it does mean that we sometimes need to *infer* process variables from the available information, rather than knowing for sure. A skilled analyst can often make very effective use of available information.

In sum, there is no easy way to define good foreign policy decision making. Nevertheless, it is a subject worth pondering. When we judge that leaders should have known better, we are voicing the expectation that, given the responsibilities of their positions, we may expect them to transcend the narrowness of their own time and place to view the world from multiple perspectives.<sup>9</sup> We return to the subject of good decision making in chapter 3.

So far, the focus has been on leaders and decision making, but the study of foreign policy involves more. At the heart of the study of foreign policy is the desire to understand countries' actions and behaviors towards other countries and the international environment generally. **Foreign policy** is defined as the totality of a country's policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders.<sup>10</sup> This definition is quite broad and encompasses a variety of issue domains or **issue areas**, which are defined as a set of interrelated concerns in policy making that are, however, more loosely tied to other sets of interrelated concerns. Traditionally, the study of foreign policy has focused primarily on the quest to maintain and enhance a country's power and security. It centered on questions of averting war when possible, deciding to fight if necessary, and—first and foremost—ensuring the integrity of the country's borders. Increasingly, economic relations between countries have gained attention. Since the end of the Cold War, globalization has become an important process that highlights the interconnectedness of the world's economies. This has had a greater impact on countries with economies that, in earlier eras, were less connected to the international economy. For those countries that traditionally have depended greatly on international trade, economic issues have had a higher priority on the foreign policy agenda much longer. The foreign policy agenda does not stop with security and economic issues: in recent decades, environmental issues have increasingly gained attention; so have issues such as human rights, population growth and migration, food and



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energy policies, as well as foreign aid, development, and the relations between richer and poorer countries.

In addition to the increased diversity of issues on the foreign policy agenda, there is also an increasing variety in the actors who engage in foreign policy making. Traditionally, investigations of foreign policy looked primarily at states and leaders. This is still largely the case, although there has been increased recognition of, and interest in, the foreign policy roles of decision makers who were not traditionally associated with international diplomacy, such as a secretary of commerce or a minister of justice. Moreover, investigators are increasingly interested in **public diplomacy**, or a government's diplomatic efforts that target citizens, the press, and other constituencies in other countries rather than their governments, and they also occasionally look beyond the government to study **citizen diplomacy**, or the efforts and effects abroad of actions by actors who are not official representatives of the state or its government. Often-cited as examples of U.S. public diplomacy are the efforts of the United States Information Agency (USIA). Other countries also engage in public diplomacy to influence the perceptions citizens in other countries have of their society and government. An example of citizen diplomacy is the Reverend Jesse Jackson's 1984 negotiation with Syria's government for the release of U.S. Navy pilot Lt. Robert Goodman, who had been captured after his plane was shot down over Syrian-controlled territory in Lebanon.<sup>11</sup>

The foreign policies of countries—whether large and powerful, small and weak, or somewhere in between—drive the course of world history. At times, countries and their leaders have pursued wise policies that have yielded peace and prosperity. Yet at other times, they have made choices that have been destructive of both, as the previous examples show. What drives the study of foreign policy is the quest to understand not just why leaders make the choices they do, but also how and why domestic and international constraints and opportunities affect their choices. After all, leaders do not exist in a vacuum; they are surrounded by advisors and a bureaucracy, influenced by domestic constituencies, and dependent on the power their state can project in the international arena. Untangling the relative impact of these various factors on foreign policy is no easy matter.<sup>12</sup> The best explanations of the foreign policy choices of countries are frequently found in the complex interplay of multiple factors.<sup>13</sup>

Untangling the relative impact of various factors on foreign policy decision making may not be an easy matter, but it need not be an impossible task, either. First, we need to be clear about what it is we seek to explain. Next, we will investigate where to look for explanations and discuss a framework that helps to organize the various factors or “causes” of foreign policy. Subsequently, we will turn our attention to the benefits of studying

## What Do We Wish to Explain?

Foreign policy analysts do not always seek to explain the same thing. So far, the descriptors “choice,” “decision,” and “behavior” have been used interchangeably in connection with foreign policy. But are foreign policy choices, decisions, and behaviors really the same thing?

Consider, once again, Saddam Hussein's incursion into Kuwait. He had several options available to him. Instead of invading Kuwait, he could have pursued a variety of other strategies to achieve his objectives, such as amassing troops on the border to underscore a threat (which he had tried at an earlier time) or some other form of coercive diplomacy. He could have gone to the Arab League or the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to address his grievances. He could have called for a summit meeting with the leaders of Kuwait, possibly with the aid of a neutral third party. He could even have decided to do nothing at all. The bottom line is that he could have acted differently than he did.

If the term options refers to the range of possible choices, **decision** refers to the option that was chosen, i.e., the choice. Not all of the options listed in the previous paragraph would have been equally attractive to Saddam Hussein. To understand how he evaluated different options, which options he would have rejected out of hand, and why he chose as he did, we must learn more about how he viewed the world and Iraq's role in it, as well as domestic factors—in other words, what objectives generally guided his foreign policy. It may also be helpful to learn more about his personality to gain insight into his perceptions of the international political environment and the motivations behind his actions. Since foreign policy decision making is often the task of not one person but of groups of individuals, we may need to understand the predisposition and worldviews of multiple individuals and how these views intersect before we can fully understand a specific foreign policy decision.

Foreign policy **behavior** is the acting out of the decision. In our example, it would be the act of invading Kuwait. Foreign policy behavior can often be described fairly straightforwardly: it consists of the actions taken to influence the behavior of an external actor or to secure a benefit for the country itself. Especially the policy makers of smaller countries often focus more on securing tangible benefits for their own state (such as military assistance or development aid) than on obtaining political influence globally (by, e.g., promoting free trade or democracy). To figure out why states undertake certain foreign policy behaviors, however, it is often necessary to dig into the decision making process; as we shall see, the outcome of actions depends not just on the decision taken by the leaders of one country, but also on how other actors in the international environment react to those actions.



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Although we often assume that foreign policy behavior is simply the acting out of a decision, the implementation phase has its own problems and pitfalls: those who are implementing the decision may misunderstand the orders they have been given, they may disagree with their orders and carry them out in a subtly or more overtly different manner than had been intended, or they may simply ignore the order and hope no one in the higher ranks notices. In sum, much can still happen between the making of a decision and its implementation, which means that the observed foreign policy behavior is not always exactly what the decision makers intended.<sup>14</sup>

**Outcomes** are a further abstraction. The argument that Saddam Hussein should have known better than to think he could get away with invading and annexing Kuwait implies a focus on the relative power of states. Although Iraq was, at the time of the invasion, a well-armed regional power, it was not as powerful as the United States. Its leader should have known that it could not hold on to its newly acquired territory if the United States chose to flex its muscle. Notice, however, that the ultimate outcome is interactive: it required the United States to decide that Kuwait mattered enough to assemble a coalition of allies and to go to war. Despite popular wisdom to the contrary, the United States could have decided otherwise. President George H. W. Bush and his team of foreign policy decision makers also had multiple options: prior to going to war with Iraq, the United States and its allies provided for the defense of the (previously poorly secured) Saudi Arabian border to prevent Saddam Hussein from continuing his conquests. Bush could have decided that preventing Saddam Hussein from extending his reach was a good enough solution. Sanctions might have helped to further contain Saddam Hussein. And the United States could have chosen to do nothing and stay out of disputes between Arab countries—one interpretation of what the American ambassador to Iraq had suggested to Saddam Hussein. Although one could argue that some of these options are less plausible than others, the point is that President George H. W. Bush's decision to push Iraq out of Kuwait was *not* a foregone conclusion. And this is true more generally: decision makers almost always have options. Even very powerful states often do not use all the resources at their disposal, and therefore, knowing what a state is capable of is only one ingredient in predicting the outcome of a conflict. Hence, outcomes require that we understand the foreign policy decisions and behaviors of not just one country but of two or more countries in interaction.

Students of foreign policy, as a specialization within the field of international relations, focus less frequently on outcomes than on options, decisions, or behaviors. A recurrent theme is the quest to help leaders make better decisions.<sup>15</sup> In the previous section we discussed some of the problems

involved in defining what constitutes a good decision. The problem, in part, lies in the tendency to work backwards from good outcomes: if it ended well, then this must have been due to a good decision. Such thinking leaves no room for the possibility that the good outcome is due to the way another actor chose to react to what may have been a rather poor decision. Even great decisions may not lead to desirable outcomes, because decision makers do not control how the leaders of other countries will react to their decisions—although strong insight into the personality and motivations of leaders of other countries is likely to improve the odds of a desirable outcome. Nevertheless, an effort to understand how, why, by whom, and on what basis decisions are made, as well as how the contexts within which decisions are made affect decision making processes, is worthwhile: the better we understand why leaders react as they do, the better the odds that we can figure out how to help decision makers transcend their own biases. That won't always guarantee good outcomes, but it gives us the best odds for achieving them.<sup>16</sup>

## Where to Look for Explanations

Who or what influences foreign policy? Although leaders are quick to take credit for foreign policy successes and the public is often quick to blame them for failures, leaders rarely make foreign policy alone. Advisory systems and government bureaucracies may be organized differently in different countries, but they always play some role in foreign policy decision making and implementation. Domestic constituencies may vary in influence, depending on the attentiveness of a public to foreign affairs or the structure of government in a specific country. Finally, the world beyond the borders affects the possibilities for foreign policy action. It may present opportunities, but it also presents constraints.

With so many factors affecting foreign policy, how do we unravel the contributions each of these multiple factors makes? First, we will not consider all these factors at once. Although foreign policy behavior is rarely caused by one person or one thing alone, it makes sense to investigate various factors separately before thinking about their interaction. It is simpler to focus on one explanatory factor at a time. After analyzing various factors separately, we can then assess their relative contributions to foreign policy behavior, taking into account also the possible interactions among these different explanatory factors. The strategy is to initially analyze different factors that influence foreign policy making in isolation and to subsequently attempt to integrate these into a comprehensive explanation, assuming that foreign policy is generally purposive or goal-directed behavior.

Second, it is possible to group the different factors into categories that have something in common. Consider, for instance, the contrast between two potential explanations for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait: one, Saddam Hussein's personal lust for power, territory, and oil led him and his country's military to invade Kuwait; two, the preoccupation of the United States with events in Russia and other former Soviet Union states led to a power vacuum in the Middle East, which in turn created the opportunity for Iraq to invade Kuwait. Remember that Iraq was the strongest actor within the region, even if on a global level it was no match for the United States.

The second explanation focuses on the relative power of states in the world and sometimes also in specific regional subsystems. It assumes that the United States had an interest in maintaining the relative balance of power among the states of the Middle East but was simultaneously not particularly focused on that region at that time. Hence, Iraq's decision to invade Kuwait was a response to an opportunity provided by the American lack of attention. It also implies that it was fairly unimportant who was in charge of foreign policy decision making in Iraq: any leader perceiving this opportunity would have been tempted to take advantage of the situation to acquire territory and oil and enhance his or her country's power. In this view, leaders and their personalities, perceptions, and motivations are less important. Rather, the emphasis is on understanding the incentives and constraints the international environment places on the behavior of states. Superficially, this would appear straightforward: the United States is a more powerful state than, for instance, the small island nation of Haiti (in the Caribbean) or tiny, landlocked Luxembourg (in Europe). But general assessments of relative power alone do not explain the specific relationships the United States has with these two small states.

The example of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait also shows that the constraints imposed by being a small and weak country are generally enduring factors affecting that state's foreign policy. Kuwait's smallness makes it vulnerable to belligerent neighbors and in need of more powerful allies. Opportunities, on the other hand, are often dependent on specific circumstances that may be temporary; they present a window of opportunity that may in time close. Saddam Hussein, Iraq's leader, acted upon just such an opportunity, convinced that the United States would stay on the sidelines. In fact, that window closed rather rapidly as the United States leadership quickly refocused its attention.

Note that the previous explanation makes certain assumptions about the motivations of leaders, namely that leaders will take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. In this case, the leader who happened to be in power in Iraq at the time did act upon the opportunity

presented by the international environment. But would any leader have acted in this manner? It is quite conceivable that a different leader, who either had a different personality or who was differently constrained by domestic political institutions or public opinion, might have decided that the potential risks of this opportunity—the chance that the United States would act as it in fact did—were not worth the potential gains. Although we can never know for sure whether Iraq would have invaded Kuwait if there had been a different leader in power in that country in the early 1990s, it is at least plausible that another leader might have decided against such a move. Indeed, even in authoritarian countries there often is lively debate among leaders and advisors as they seek to define the best policy for the country.

This implies that individuals and the decisions they make are a major determinant of foreign policy.<sup>17</sup> In order to understand foreign policy decisions and behaviors, then, we must understand leaders—and their personalities, perceptions, and motivations. In addition, domestic political institutions and public opinion may also play a role, depending on the nature of the political system.

The two explanations—the motivations of individual leaders on the one hand and the opportunities and constraints presented by the international environment on the other—can be seen as competing, but also as complementary.<sup>18</sup> The preceding paragraphs indicate that it is ultimately leaders who make decisions, which would argue in favor of a focus on leaders. This is certainly appropriate, but it must also be noted that leaders make decisions within the context of an environment that presents them with problems, opportunities, and constraints. Hence, we must understand both the circumstances and the individual, as well as the interaction between them.<sup>19</sup>

This distinction between the circumstances and the individual is captured by the concept of **levels of analysis**.<sup>20</sup> In this book, we will use three levels of analysis: the individual, the state, and the international system. These three levels of analysis correspond to the different foci of foreign policy analysis: individuals ponder options and make decisions, states engage in foreign policy behaviors, and the interaction between states in the international system yields outcomes. These connections are summarized in table 1.1.

The **individual level of analysis** focuses on leaders and decision makers in an effort to explain foreign policy. It assumes that individuals shape the course of history, because it is their choices and decisions that drive the course of events. The analysis of individuals might focus on either their personalities or on their perceptions—how they make sense of their world



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and the events occurring within it. The first focus leads to the study of personality traits, beliefs, and values as the factors that explain foreign policy decisions. It emphasizes the enduring qualities of an individual decision maker. Insight into the personality, character, beliefs, and values of the individual enhances our ability to gauge what motivates that decision maker. Does it make a difference whether a leader is extremely power hungry? Does it make a difference whether he or she enjoys the political game? Students of personality and other enduring qualities of leaders (such as their character) suggest that the answer is most often affirmative, as we explore further in chapter 2. The second focus leads to the study of the perceptions and how these influence foreign policy decision making. The individual's perceptions, or the process by which a person makes sense of events and situations in her or his world, are specific to that situation or event. Students of perception, framing, and problem representation do not negate the importance of personality, but they are more interested in how policy makers make sense of—or define—specific decision making situations.<sup>21</sup> Research at the individual level of analysis frequently employs concepts borrowed from psychology, such as **framing**—defined as a tendency for people to judge risk in terms of how a situation is presented to them.<sup>22</sup> We explore perception in greater detail in chapter 3.

Furthermore, individuals often do not make decisions alone but instead work together with others in a group or in a bureaucratic setting.<sup>23</sup> In such instances, their individual personalities and perceptions interact as they jointly determine how best to define the problem before them. Group interactions are often classified at the individual level of analysis because the focus tends to be on understanding the dynamics of interpersonal interaction rather than on the group as an undifferentiated unit. Group decision making, as well as other aspects of the advisory system and bureaucracy, is the subject of chapter 4.

The **state level of analysis** focuses on factors internal to the state as those that compel states to engage in specific foreign policy behaviors. Such analyses include the institutional framework of the state (such as the relationships between the executive and legislative branches of government, the

Table 1.1 Levels of analysis and the study of foreign policy

| Level of Analysis             |  | Foreign Policy Focus                       |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Individual<br>State<br>System |  | Options/Decisions<br>Behaviors<br>Outcomes |  |
|                               |  |  |  |
|                               |  |  |  |

organization of the government bureaucracy, or whether the state is a democracy), domestic constituencies (such as interest groups, ethnic groups, or public opinion more generally), economic conditions, and also the state's national history and culture. At this level of analysis, the emphasis is on how factors internal to the state influence the behavior of that state on the global stage.<sup>24</sup> From a decision making perspective, these factors are often characterized as constraints that determine the parameters of the possible for leaders. Of course, the relationship between leaders and the domestic environment is much more complicated than this simple characterization suggests, as we will see in chapter 5.

Finally, the **system level of analysis** focuses on comparisons (and interactions) between states. This level of analysis asks questions about the relative power of states.<sup>25</sup> The international system is defined as a set of states whose interactions are guided by their relative capabilities, such as their power and wealth, which influence their possibilities for action and for success on the global stage. These relative attributes may change across time as a country's economy yields more wealth or as it attains technological or military capacities. The reverse may also be true: countries can lose as well as gain power. Changes in relative capabilities of states may create opportunities, but they may also serve to increase the constraints on states. An increase in military capacities may embolden a state, while an increasingly interdependent world economy presents constraints.

Note that the system level of analysis makes certain assumptions about the political interests of countries, among which is first and foremost the idea that a state's power is central to its ability to maintain the integrity of its borders. However, the definition of political interest, sometimes called **national interest**, is not necessarily straightforward. Remember that the U.S. response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was not a foregone conclusion. In fact, Saddam Hussein may have calculated that the United States would decide it was not in its interest to intervene. Hence, the systems level of analysis can provide insight into the capabilities of states and explain outcomes, but it cannot explain foreign policy decisions or behaviors very well, as we explore further in chapter 6.

On the dividing line between the state and system levels of analysis sits the **two-level game**. This concept describes the fact that foreign policy decision makers try to satisfy domestic constituencies and international imperatives simultaneously, which oftentimes requires a delicate balancing act.<sup>26</sup> This is especially true when the domestic and international environment push decision makers in different directions. Such is often the case in the economic sector: workers may prefer protectionist policies that keep their jobs secure even if the industry in which they work is no longer



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internationally competitive. On the other hand, countries that have similar industries that are internationally competitive will try to preserve access to as many markets as possible. Hence, decision makers are caught between the international principle of free trade and the interests of their constituents, who may lose their jobs as a result of international competition. Adhering to the internationally accepted principles while not antagonizing domestic constituencies can be tough.

Much has been written about the merits of studying international politics at different levels of analysis. Some scholars have staked out clear preferences for one or another level of analysis,<sup>27</sup> while others understand them to be complementary.<sup>28</sup> The complementarity of the different levels of analysis can be illustrated by linking them to an analysis of the causes of events. We might classify causes into different categories, such as deep, intermediate, and precipitating causes.<sup>29</sup> Consider the following explanation of the outbreak of World War I:

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, by a Serbian nationalist during a visit to Sarajevo (now located in Bosnia-Herzegovina) is frequently portrayed as the cause of World War I. This assassination occurred in a context: the rise of nationalism and class conflict preoccupied leaders in many European countries at the time. These factors had been present for decades, but had not led to war. The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires were particularly vulnerable to unrest and nationalist secession, while Germany had only recently become a unified entity and was rapidly expanding its industrial base—an important source of power. Russia was trying to expand its industrial capacity and modernize its military, but it faced increasing turmoil domestically. Both this turmoil within many of the states of Europe and a changing balance of power among them made conditions favorable for conflict. In addition, the relationships between the larger powers in Europe were changing: since the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia, Britain, France, and Prussia (the predecessor to Germany) had maintained a balance of power among themselves. Around the turn of the twentieth century, this Concert of Europe began to disintegrate as Germany strengthened itself economically and militarily after its unification in 1871. To counter this rising power, Britain, France, and later Russia allied themselves, while Germany responded by establishing closer ties with the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. In other words, the Concert of Europe split into two camps.

Despite these circumstances, war was not inevitable; the leaders of Europe still had options—even if these leaders perceived themselves to be hemmed in by their agreements and plunged ahead into war without much reflection. The assassination, which can be classified as the precipitating

cause, was sure to cause a crisis against the backdrop of domestic nationalist agitation and class conflict (intermediate causes) and the changing balance of power among the larger European states (a deep cause), but a crisis does not inevitably lead to war. Different decisions could have been made, and a different outcome might have resulted. Hence, in the final analysis, the decisions made by leaders are the key to understanding international politics.

This does not mean that the domestic and international environments are irrelevant. Leaders must be understood in the context of their time and place. The changing balance of power in the period leading up to World War I certainly created a situation in which a crisis might be more difficult to manage than in a more stable and predictable international environment. Note that what we earlier termed the deep cause of the war corresponds to the system level of analysis. Moreover, the domestic nationalism and class conflict prevalent in European countries at the time created a context in which a political assassination could be interpreted as a threat to the integrity of the state. The Ottoman Empire had already begun to disintegrate. The Austrian leaders knew that their own multinational empire was vulnerable as well. This certainly colored their perceptions and interpretations of what, from historical distance, looks like a relatively minor event. Note that this intermediate cause corresponds to the state level of analysis.

Was war inevitable in 1914? No. The state (intermediate) and system level (deep) causes certainly created a tense environment in which such a decision became more likely, but the environment did not unequivocally determine either the decisions or the outcome. Leaders made decisions. They acted upon their evaluations of the situation they faced and chose from the options they perceived they had. In turn, other leaders reacted with their own assessments and decisions. Collectively, their decisions yielded the outcome: world war. Note that the decisions of leaders in reaction to the assassination correspond to the individual level of analysis. Table 1.2 summarizes this comparison.

So, where do we look for explanations? We can choose from the individual, state, or system level of analysis. Alternatively, we may seek to understand the relative importance of causal factors at each of these levels

Table 1.2. Levels of analysis and causation

| Level of Analysis | Type of Causal Factor |  |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
|                   | Individual            | Decisions in response to Precipitating Event |
| State             |                       | Intermediate Cause                           |
| System            |                       | Deep Cause                                   |



of analysis. Whether we choose one or another level of analysis depends largely on what we seek to explain: decisions, behaviors, or outcomes.

### What Is to Be Gained by Studying Foreign Policy Comparatively?

The goal of foreign policy analysis is to gain generally applicable knowledge about how foreign policy decisions are made; why leaders make the decisions they make, why states engage in specific kinds of foreign policy behaviors, as well as to assess the opportunities and constraints presented by the international system.<sup>31</sup> How is this best achieved?

Historical events happen only once, and each is unique. However, focusing on what makes each event unique gives us little general knowledge. Knowing all available details of, for instance, the Cuban Missile Crisis, tells us very little about how leaders *generally* respond to foreign policy crises. The latter concept can be defined by three elements: there is a high threat to something that is valued and important, leaders perceive that they have only a short amount of time to make a decision, and the occurrence of the threatening situation takes the decision makers by surprise.<sup>32</sup>

Most decision makers and observers of foreign policy intuitively recognize a crisis when one occurs. However, one task of foreign policy analysis is to move beyond intuitive knowledge to explicit knowledge. Making knowledge explicit helps us reexamine our assumptions and question the lessons we have derived from our experiences. This is what foreign policy analysis aims to do: to systematically contrast and compare. Although decision makers derive knowledge from their experiences, they often interpret the lessons narrowly, fail to reexamine their gut reactions, and they compare previous and current crises only superficially. In doing the latter, leaders may make analogies on the basis of superficial commonalities while ignoring significant differences between situations.<sup>33</sup>

Consider for instance, the often-heard saying that leaders are prone to fight the last war. Chamberlain may have appeased Hitler because he hoped to avoid a repetition of the seemingly automatic sequence of events that had led to war in 1914. However, because Chamberlain faced a very different kind of threat, his actions were disastrous—showing that those with knowledge of history may still be condemned to repeat it unless they gain the deeper insights that can be derived from a more comprehensive comparative analysis of such historical events. Chamberlain was comparing the crisis of 1938 with a (then fairly recent) historical event. Since he wished to avoid the outcome of that previous event, he judged that he should avoid the kind of rigid attitudes that had sent Europe into war so quickly in 1914. Hence, he compromised.

There is quite a bit of evidence that leaders use analogies when trying to make sense of a foreign policy situation that demands a decision.<sup>34</sup> However, from a scientific point of view, such comparisons can be quite problematic: a single observation is used to predict another, when closer (or deeper) comparison or the use of additional observations might have helped evaluate whether the expectation of "same action, same outcome" would have been warranted.<sup>35</sup> Additional observations, in particular, can often help to establish to what degree a current problem really is similar to one that occurred in the past. Additional observations help decision makers reexamine the lessons they have intuitively gleaned from past experience. Such a reexamination can move decision makers beyond simple comparisons to a more generalized understanding of crises and, ideally, a better understanding of how to best manage a particular crisis.

This is what foreign policy analysts aim to do: to arrive at generalized knowledge that can enhance our understanding of the similarities and differences between foreign policy events. This can help guide the state's foreign policy decision makers so they do not stumble into a war when they wish to preserve peace, or it can enable them to understand the personalities of other leaders to facilitate productive negotiations and increase the likelihood of desirable outcomes.<sup>36</sup> Imagine for a moment the difference it might have made if Chamberlain had had access to a psychological profile of Hitler, rather than relying on his own intuitions about the German leader. Chamberlain was not the first (or the last) decision maker to think that, after meeting with another leader in person, he could trust that individual. Although politicians are often astute judges of character, their intuitions have their limitations when judging people from different countries and cultures, often after meeting them in highly formal situations for only a short period of time.

In sum, studying foreign policy comparatively and systematically has the potential to yield knowledge that is far more helpful than merely knowing historical facts: a systematic understanding of foreign policy events as alike or different can help decision makers to fashion appropriate responses. Moreover, understanding the peculiarities of the personalities of specific leaders can facilitate more useful and productive diplomacy.<sup>37</sup>

### How to Compare

Understanding the need to make comparative and systematic assessments leads to the next question: how does one compare different foreign policy decisions, behaviors, or outcomes? Foreign policy analysis is not satisfied to merely describe decisions, behaviors and outcomes, but is defined by the



quest to understand *why* such decisions were made, *what* options were considered (and why not others), *who* or *what* explains behaviors as well as outcomes, and—if the outcomes were unfavorable—what could have improved the likelihood of a better result. This requires us to think in terms of *causes* and *effects*.

Causes are the factors that contribute to various foreign policy options being considered in a decision process, that compel decision makers to choose a specific decision as—in their view—best suited to achieving the desired outcome, that explain specific foreign policy behaviors, and that contribute to the occurrence of an outcome. In foreign policy analysis, causes are called **independent variables**. The effect (or the set of options considered, the decision, the behavior, or the outcome) that we seek to explain is call the **dependent variable**. The effect, or dependent variable, would not have occurred if the independent variables had not been present. In addition, the dependent variable would have taken a different shape if different independent variables had been present or if the independent variables had been of different relative strength. Table 1.3 illustrates the comparison of these different terminologies. In the opening section of this chapter, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler, and Khrushchev's decision to build missile sites in Cuba were all dependent variables (or the things to be explained). Each of these was a decision that was followed by behaviors (or actions) that carried out the decision. Each of these was also preceded by a set of possible options that were considered and out of which a choice was made. Each of these decisions was widely perceived as puzzling—and in need of an explanation—largely because the outcomes were not what the leaders intended. These examples reflect the emphasis of foreign policy analysis on explaining option selection, decisions, and behaviors—or on the individual and state level of analysis.

Although the terminology of independent and dependent variables may be unfamiliar to you, thinking in terms of causes and effects is not. What makes foreign policy analysis different from nonscientific forms of cause-and-effect thinking? Foreign policy analysts try to structure their investigations so that they maximize the gain in generalized knowledge and minimize bias. Consider once again Chamberlain: he compared the crisis he faced in 1938, when Hitler threatened to invade Czechoslovakia, only to the crisis on the eve of World War I and concluded that standing firm would lead to war, because it did in 1914. The limited comparison, combined with Chamberlain's desire to avoid war, biased his thinking in favor of appeasement. What might he have done to achieve a more generally applicable understanding of crisis and how best to deal with the one that confronted him?

Table 1.3 Foreign policy analysis and social scientific terminology

| Factors that contribute to the occurrence of foreign policy decision, behavior, or outcome | Foreign policy decision, behavior, or outcome (the thing to be explained) |
|--|---|
| Causes   | Effect  |
| Independent variables  | Dependent variable  |

One, he could have studied many crises and have investigated how often, and under what circumstances, they led to war or were resolved peacefully.<sup>38</sup> Two, he could have made a much more detailed comparison between the known facts of the current and previous crises.<sup>39</sup> In doing so, he could have outlined the similarities between the two situations, but he might have focused especially on how the two events differed. Although the urgency of the situation would have made it difficult to carry out extensive research projects at that moment, foreign policy analysts are in a position to produce such generalized knowledge and make it available to decision makers.

The two types of investigations previously outlined loosely follow the two main research strategies foreign policy analysts use: comparisons of large or small numbers of cases. The former are called **large-N comparisons** and the latter **small-N comparisons** (N is the statistical notation for number of cases). What are the relative advantages of large-N versus small-N studies? Comparisons of large numbers of cases enable researchers to evaluate general cause-and-effect patterns—or relationships—through the use of statistical methodologies. It would be possible to include information on all states in the world for a given period of time, provided one could get the information for all of them. On the basis of such comprehensive data, it would be possible to make general statements about, e.g., whether democracies are less likely to initiate war than nondemocratic countries. However, it would not be possible to make fine distinctions between how democratic (or not) various countries are. In its most simplistic form, we would have two categories: democratic and nondemocratic. We could create a finer-grained scale, but we would inevitably lose some information about the nature of democracy in each country. Whether that loss of information jeopardizes our ability to make valid assessments depends on how well the categorization suits the research question: war-proneness may depend less on finer-grained distinctions about how democratic a country is than on the fact that leaders are held accountable in democracies.

Comparisons of smaller numbers of cases allow for more detailed analyses of similarities and differences among both the independent and dependent variables of the cases.<sup>40</sup> When studying fewer countries, it is

patterns in decisions and decision making processes. Without the ability to compare cases, it would be exceedingly difficult to assess what lessons are to be derived from a specific event—and, as Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler illustrates, deriving the wrong lesson from an event, or making a faulty analogy, can have disastrous consequences for policy making!

### Chapter Summary

- Foreign policy analysis is motivated by the desire to understand the interactions of countries. It assumes that individual decision makers, alone or in groups, make foreign policy decisions. It also assumes that foreign policies are usually determined by the complex interplay of multiple factors.
- Foreign policy analysis can seek to explain different aspects of foreign policy. It may seek to understand what options decision makers had and why they made the decisions they did; it may seek to explain the foreign policy behavior of states; or why certain outcomes occurred.
- Foreign policy decisions, behaviors, and outcomes are studied at different levels of analysis. In this book, we use three levels of analysis: the individual, the state, and the system level of analysis.
- Studying foreign policy comparatively provides greater insight into the conduct and consequences of foreign policy than does studying single cases or drawing simple analogies.
- The objective of foreign policy analysis is to attain generalizable knowledge about foreign policy decision making, behavior, and outcomes. Foreign policy analysts think in terms of independent and dependent variables. They may compare large or small numbers of cases. They sometimes use counterfactuals to evaluate independent (or causal) variables.

### Terms

Rationality  
Good decisions  
Foreign policy  
Issue Areas  
Public diplomacy  
Citizen diplomacy  
Foreign policy options

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possible to make finer distinctions between the nature of democracy in each country, for example. Rather than using categories or numerical indicators to summarize our assessments of specific countries, small-N comparisons use descriptions that can be nuanced and rich in detail. Less information is lost, but the selection of countries to be studied must be done very carefully to ensure that the cases reflect the variation that can be found in the larger set of countries to which we expect our findings to apply.<sup>41</sup> After all, the goal is to acquire generalizable knowledge: whether we study a large or a small number of cases, we hope to learn something that translates beyond the cases studied and not only helps us understand historical foreign policy decisions, behaviors, and outcomes but helps us recognize patterns in new situations as they emerge. In other words, we hope that our findings apply also to foreign policy problems we have not studied, including those that have not yet occurred.

An alternative strategy is to evaluate what might have happened if some aspect of the historical circumstances of a historical situation had been different. Historical events happen only once, and it is tempting to conclude that they were *bound* to happen because they *did* happen. To avoid thinking in such deterministic terms, it can be useful to think about **counterfactuals** in our efforts to evaluate the multiple factors that influenced a specific foreign policy decision, behavior, or outcome. Counterfactuals are essentially decisions, behaviors, or outcomes that differ from the actual facts of history.<sup>42</sup> They help us evaluate whether we have accurately determined the independent variables in historical cases. Consider, for instance, whether Hitler could have been stopped if Chamberlain had taken a firmer stand in 1938. Would Hitler have backed down? Or would Britain have found itself engaged in war sooner than it did? The answer to these questions hinges on interpretations of Hitler's personality. One might conclude that, faced with stronger pressure from the more powerful countries in Europe, he might have decided to contain his ambitions. However, it is also quite possible that diplomacy could never have contained his desire to create a strong German empire. A careful assessment of Hitler's character would be necessary to evaluate the likelihood of either result. Pondering how the course of history might have been different helps us understand what decisions and behaviors were most responsible for the historical outcomes.<sup>43</sup> The usefulness of a counterfactual, or alternative, history depends on a careful reconstruction of actual history and on a meticulous assessment of the impact a changed value of one of the independent variables would very likely have had on altering the actual historical outcome.

Studying foreign policy comparatively, whether studying different foreign policy decisions made by the leaders of one state or comparing the foreign policies of multiple states, has the advantage of allowing the identification of



Foreign policy decisions  
 Foreign policy behavior  
 Foreign policy outcomes  
 Levels of analysis  
 Individual level of analysis  
 Framing  
 State level of analysis  
 System level of analysis  
 National interest  
 Two-level game  
 Crisis  
 Independent variable  
 Dependent variable  
 Large-N comparison  
 Small-N comparison  
 Counterfactuals

### Study Questions

1. What is foreign policy analysis, and what is the objective of those who study it?
2. What makes it so difficult to determine whether a foreign policy decision was a good decision?
3. What is the difference between foreign policy decisions, behaviors, and outcomes? Why would you wish to distinguish between them?
4. What are the three levels of analysis? How do they relate to foreign policy decisions, behaviors, and outcomes? What is their use in the study of foreign policy?
5. Why is it important to study foreign policy comparatively? How does doing so improve judgment?
6. What are independent and dependent variables? How does thinking in terms of variables help foreign policy analysts in their quest to attain general knowledge?

### Suggestions for Further Reading

A classic work in the study of foreign policy is Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*. It was recently reissued with two new essays as *Foreign Policy Decision-Making (Revisited)*.

A book that discusses how decision makers often use historical analogies and how they might improve their use of history is Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers*.

Several books have discussed the connection between the academic study of foreign policy and diplomatic practice: George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy*; Nincic and Leppgold, eds., *Being Useful: Policy Relevance and International Relations Theory*.

There are a number of excellent essays on the history of foreign policy analysis as a field of study. The most recent is Hudson, "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations"; Gerner, "The Evolution of the Study of Foreign Policy"; Hudson and Vore, "Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow."

Much has been written about the comparative method. Especially helpful on how to create well-crafted case study research designs are: George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison"; King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*.

### Notes

1. Quoted in Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, 212.
2. Czechoslovakia ceased to exist when on January 1, 1993, it split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, two sovereign states, as a result of what was widely touted as a "velvet divorce" because the dissolution took place without a war.
3. In 2003, the U.S. went to war with Iraq, in part to topple Saddam Hussein. There was no question the U.S. had the military capacity to be successful in this effort, although the reconstruction effort has, as of this writing, proven more difficult than anticipated.
4. Philip E. Tetlock, "Good Judgment in International Politics: Three Psychological Perspectives"; Lloyd S. Etheredge, "Wisdom and Good Judgment in Politics."
5. James D. Morrow, *Game Theory for Political Scientists*, 17. This definition of rationality is generally accepted by rational choice theorists. Many foreign policy analysts, including many who study foreign policy from a psychological or cognitive perspective, define rational decision making in a more global manner. Such definitions make more comprehensive demands on both the leader's knowledge and the process by which various options are weighed and evaluated. For a classic enumeration of a rational decision making model, see Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis"; Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed.; for a well-known critique, see Herbert A. Simon, "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology

with Political Science." Vesna Danilovic argues that the psychological or cognitive perspective misrepresents rational choice theory ("The Rational-Cognitive Debate and Polihouristic Theory," in *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz). This book argues that the difference between rational and cognitive approaches lies in the aspects of the decision making process which are investigated and that cross-theoretical communication is facilitated by adopting the rational choice theory definition of rationality. For a comparable approach, see Alex Mintz, "Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Polihouristic Perspective," in *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz. The concept of rationality is investigated further in Chapter 3.

6. Morrow, *Game Theory for Political Scientists*, 20-22.
7. Tetlock, "Good Judgment in International Politics"; Stanley A. Renshon, "Psychological Sources of Good Judgment in Political Leaders: A Framework for Analysis," in *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy: Theory and Application*, ed. Stanley A. Renshon and Deborah Welch Larson; Stanley A. Renshon and Deborah Welch Larson, *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy: Theory and Application*.
8. Renshon, "Psychological Sources of Good Judgment in Political Leaders."
9. Welch, "Culture and Emotion," 208, makes this point.
10. Overviews of the development of the field of foreign policy analysis are provided by Gerner, "The Evolution of the Study of Foreign Policy"; Hudson with Vore, "Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" and Hudson, "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations." For a recent critical assessment of the field, see also Houghton, "Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision-making: Toward a Constructivist Approach."
11. See, e.g., Karin L. Stanford, *Beyond the Boundaries: Reverend Jesse Jackson in International Affairs*.
12. Indeed, Houghton charges that foreign policy analysis has paid too little attention to the impact of either the domestic or international environment on decision making ("Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," 40, 34).
13. Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision-making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*.
14. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis."
15. George, *Bridging the Gap*; Nincic and Leppgold, *Being Useful*; Renshon and Larson, *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy*.
16. Renshon, "Psychological Sources of Good judgment," 48; Welch, "Culture and Emotion," 208.
17. Hudson, "Foreign Policy Analysis."
18. See Knill and Lenschow, "Seek and Ye Shall Find"; Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts*.
19. Houghton, "Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision-Making."

20. Singer, "The Level of Analysis Problem"; Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*; Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*; see also Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts*; Rourke, *International Politics*; Kegley and Wittkopf, *World Politics*; Hughes, *Continuity and Change*.
21. Representative of the emphasis on leadership and personality is the work of M.G. Hermann (see, for instance, her "Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior" or "Who Leads Matters"). Representative of an emphasis on perception and problem representation are works by Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, and Sylvan and Voss, *Problem Representation*.
22. Vertzberger, *Risk Taking and Decisionmaking*; Kahneman and Tversky; Levy, "An Introduction to Prospect Theory"; "Loss Aversion, Framing and Bargaining."
23. There is a rich literature on bureaucratic politics. Some well-known examples are Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis"; Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*; Bendor and Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models"; George, *Presidential Decisionmaking*; Hart et al., *Beyond Groupthink*.
24. One example of work at this level of analysis is Hudson, *Culture and Foreign Policy*.
25. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; see also Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and its Critics*.
26. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games"; Evans et al., *Double-Edged Diplomacy*.
27. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Singer, "The Level of Analysis Problem."
28. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making*.
29. Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts*.
30. See, for instance, Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making*; Rosenau, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy."
31. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making*; George, "Case Studies and Theory Development"; George, *Bridging the Gap*.
32. Hermann, *Crises in Foreign Policy*, 29-30. There are other definitions of the concept. However, these mostly boil down to the elements enumerated by Hermann. See, e.g., Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, 7-9.
33. Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*; Spellman and Holyoak, "If Saddam is Hitler then Who is George Bush?"; Keane, "What Makes and Analogy Difficult?"
34. Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*; Hemmer, *Which Lessons Matter?*; Reiter, *Crucible of Beliefs*; Peterson, "The Use of Analogies in Developing Outer Space Law."
35. King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 212-13; see also Khong, *Analogies at War*; Hemmer, *Which Lessons Matter?*
36. George, *Bridging the Gap*; Nincic and Leppgold, *Being Useful*.
37. Neustadt and May recognized that such a comparative understanding of history is useful not just for diplomats. They taught their strategy for comparing



historical events to business students, believing that such skills can serve individuals in different professions.

38. Such an investigation was undertaken by Lebow in his *Between Peace and War*.
39. Such investigations were undertaken by, e.g., Hemmer, *Which Lessons Matter?*; Houghton, "The Role of Analogical Reasoning"; Khong, *Analogies at War*; Neustad and May, *Thinking in Time*.
40. Lijphart, "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research."
41. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development"; George and McKeown, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making"; King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 226-27.
42. Tetlock and Belkin, *Counterfactual Thought Experiments*; Lebow, "What's So Different About a Counterfactual?"
43. Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing"

## Chapter 2

# Do Leaders Shape Foreign Policy?

### Chapter Preview

- Explains the value of studying leaders for understanding foreign policy making.
- Explains the difficulties as well as the benefits of studying leaders.
- Explains various strategies for studying leaders, such as the operational code and leadership trait analysis.
- Explains the importance of understanding emotions in foreign policy decision making.

### Why Study Leaders?

Some scholars accept without question that leaders shape the course of world politics. Others argue that individuals are to a considerable degree constrained by their historical circumstances and that they are compelled to make certain decisions. The most obvious example of such a scenario is when another country attacks or declares war. In such a case, leaders have very few options: they can fight or surrender. Which course of action is chosen may depend on the relative might of the opponent and the likelihood of successfully resisting the attack, but it may also reflect a desire to defend one's country against all odds. Consider for example the Dutch decision to fight the German invasion during World War II. The Netherlands had stayed out of World War I, had a tradition of neutrality, and expected to stay out of World War II as well. On May 10, 1940, the Germans launched an attack that took the Dutch government by surprise. Nevertheless, its ill-equipped and poorly trained military fought as hard as